

Kendall, Amos

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# Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Amos Kendall

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"NEVER WE FORGET"



## EMINENT EARLY KENTUCKIANS

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WESTERN KENTUCKY TEACHERS COLLEGE  
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### AMOS KENDALL

(By Frances Anderson, A. M.)

John Quincy Adams wrote in his "Diary" in 1840: "Both Jackson and Van Buren have been for twelve years the tool of Amos Kendall." That Amos Kendall was among the inner circle of the the Jackson "Kitchen Cabinet" is well known; but that he was schooled in Kentucky politics during the hectic generation preceding his advent into the national arena, is not generally known. After graduating at Dartmouth College, he drifted into Kentucky from Massachusetts in the Great Migration of 1814, taught in the home of Henry Clay for a year, and while there studied law and was qualified as an attorney in the old Lexington court-house. In 1815, Richard M. Johnson invited him to Georgetown to edit the "Minerva." The paper was short-lived, but Kendall remained in Georgetown as editor of the "Georgetown Patriot," lawyer, and postmaster until he was called to the editorship of the "Argus of Western America" at Frankfort in the autumn of 1816. In this position, from 1816 to 1829, he made his greatest contribution to Kentucky. He was a brilliant writer and took a keen interest in all Kentucky problems. In 1819, he launched a campaign for public education, and in 1822 drew up a report for the General Assembly which, according to Barnard, was "one of the most valuable documents on education that had at that time appeared." Banking, currency, "relief," and the New Court Party received his special attention. So forceful was he in advocating his principles that his enemies denounced him in extravagant language. The "Danville Advertiser," for example, called him "Poor Amos the Yankee," and "The lying editor of the lying Argus of lying fame." He supported Clay in 1824, but broke with him, and is credited with having done more than any other one man toward turning Kentucky to Jackson in 1828. As a reward for his services in Kentucky, President Jackson made him Fourth Auditor in the Treasury Department in March, 1829. From Washington, soon after he left Kentucky, he wrote to A. G. Merriweather, his partner on the "Argus": "I shall be proud still to consider myself a citizen of Kentucky....With all her scenes of blood,

I shall ever love her with an affection stronger than I have for the State of my birth. She has been the theatre of my sufferings and triumphs. To her justice and generosity do I owe the rank I now hold in the nation." He was twice married to Kentuckians.

The remaining forty years of his life after leaving Kentucky were as colorful as were the fifteen spent within the State. He served as Postmaster-General 1835-1840. His most trying years were 1840-1845, during which time he was financially embarrassed and in ill health. The year of Jackson's death, he found in Samuel F. B. Morse one who he could serve as faithfully, and with much more financial gain, than he had served Jackson. Until his death in 1869, at the age of eighty, he remained business and legal advisor for the Morse Telegraph Company. In this capacity, he amassed great wealth and gave generously to worthy institutions. His greatest monuments are Calvary Baptist Church and Gallaudet College for the deaf and dumb in Washington City. He kept up his interest in politics until his death, vigorously denouncing the right of seces-

sion, and keenly criticizing the Republican reconstruction policy in 1868.



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